

Higher Education Support for Norfolk Care Leavers



Thinking about going to University?

Higher education (HE) can be a life changing opportunity, opening up career pathways, increasing your employment prospects and making lifelong connections. As a care leaver, there is a wide range of help available to support you along the way. This leaflet will outline some of the help you can receive from Norfolk County Council and your chosen university/college.

If you are considering HE, it is important that this is recorded in your Pathway Plan along with details of what financial and practical support you will need. Norfolk County Council can support you in HE up until your 25th birthday. If you turn 25 during your course, your Life Beyond Care worker will discuss with you how to manage your financial and support arrangements beyond this point.

Choosing and applying for courses

If you are at a 6th form or college, you will be able to access careers information, advice and guidance where you are studying. This will include information around your Post 18 options and what HE courses may be suitable to support your career goals. Your 6th form/college will also be able to support you with your UCAS application (this is the process for applying for most HE courses).

If you're not currently enrolled at a 6th form or college or require additional careers support, your Life Beyond Care worker can help arrange a careers guidance meeting via the Virtual School. This will help you to make an informed decision about your options and give you any practical support you may need e.g. with writing a UCAS personal statement.

If you haven't studied A Levels or other Level 3 qualifications, there are alternative pathways into HE, such as Access to HE courses, which are available to Adult Learners (aged 19+).

Many universities and colleges will make 'Contextual Offers', where they lower the course entry requirements for students whose personal circumstances have prevented them from achieving their full potential.

As well as Degree courses, there are other HE pathways available such as Higher National Diplomas, Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

Open Days / Admission Interviews

Norfolk County Council will support you to attend Open Days and up to three university admissions interviews, including transport costs and overnight accommodation when required. If you wish to arrange more interviews/visits you can discuss and agree this with your worker. If you want your worker or carer to go with you this can be requested, just make sure they know the dates well in advance.

Higher Education Bursary

Norfolk County Council will pay you a £2000 Higher Education Bursary, if the course you plan to study is at Level 4 or above and lasts for at least two academic years, up until your 25th birthday. The bursary can be paid in a lump sum or instalments throughout your course. This bursary is in addition to any other funding agreed in your Pathway Plan. Please note, if you don't complete your course you may be required to pay the bursary back.

Accommodation support

Norfolk County Council (NCC) will normally pay for your accommodation while you are studying your first HE course, up until your 25th birthday. This could include a room in halls of residence or local rented accommodation.

The amount NCC will contribute towards rented accommodation will be based on the average cost of rented accommodation where you plan to study. You or your worker will need to talk to the university/college you plan to attend about your accommodation options.

If you decide on term-time only accommodation and are planning to return to your home area outside of term-time, we can help you with the cost of this accommodation too. You will need to agree with your worker where you are going to stay - this might be with your previous carers or in temporary accommodation. In some circumstances, NCC could support you to maintain your tenancy in your home area throughout your studies (up until your 25th birthday). Your Pathway Plan should be used to detail where you will be staying and how this will be funded.

If you are planning on studying with the Open University (online degrees) then NCC will not pay for your accommodation costs.

Help with travel costs

If the university/college you plan to attend is away from where you were previously living, then NCC will contribute to your return-home travel costs up until your 25th birthday. You will need to talk to your worker about how often you might want to return home and these arrangements will need to be recorded in your Pathway Plan.

Support from your Life Beyond Care Worker

Your Life Beyond Care worker will stay in contact with you to offer support until the end of your course or until your 25th birthday, whichever comes sooner. This will include regular meetings, either where you are studying or when you return home. You will need to agree with your worker how often, where and when they will be in contact and record this in your Pathway Plan.

If you are planning to do a specialist course and need additional software or equipment, talk to your Life Beyond Care worker about this to make sure everything you need is agreed and in place before you start your course.

Student Finance

You will need to apply for a tuition fee loan from Student Finance England to cover the cost of your course. In order to pay for your living expenses, e.g. food, household bills, day to day travel, internet, etc. you will need to apply for a maintenance loan. Care leavers are entitled to claim the maximum amount for a maintenance loan. Your tuition and maintenance loan will need to be repaid once you have completed your course and are earning above the minimum repayment threshold.

Support from your Higher Education Institution

Universities and colleges have a range of bursaries and grants which care leavers can apply for. These may include course fee reductions or cash grants. Most HE institutions will provide additional support around finding accommodation, settling in and signposting to other help available. Make sure you and your worker find out what support your chosen college or university offers care leavers.

Postgraduate study

If you wish to continue your studies beyond your first degree e.g. a masters or PhD course, make sure this is recorded in your Pathway Plan. To help with the cost of postgraduate studies, you can apply for a Masters or Doctoral loan via Student Finance to cover your tuition and some of your living costs. You may also be able to apply for additional bursaries, grants and scholarships from your college/university as well as charitable organisations. Many postgraduate students will work part time alongside their course to support themselves. Any additional financial support required to enable you to complete your programme of study would need to be discussed with your Life Beyond Care worker and agreed in your Pathway Plan.

For further info, please contact Jamie Robson, Virtual School Learning and Employment Adviser:

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Useful websites:

www.propel.org.uk *information about the support available to care leavers from universities and colleges in the UK.*

www.prospects.ac.uk *information and advice about graduate career pathways*

www.ucas.ac.uk *website for exploring and applying for university courses*